Writing Identifiable Learning Outcomes

Marilee J. Bresciani, Ph.D.
Professor, Postsecondary Education and Co-Director of the Center for Educational Leadership, Innovation, and Policy
San Diego State University
3590 Camino Del Rio North
San Diego, California, U.S.A.
619-594-8318
Marilee.Bresciani@mail.sdsu.edu
The key questions…

• What are we trying to do and why? or
• What is my program supposed to accomplish? or
• What do I want students to be able to do and/or know as a result of my course/workshop/orientation/program?
• How well are we doing it?
• How do we know?
• How do we use the information to improve or celebrate successes?
• Do the improvements we make contribute to our intended end results?
The Iterative Systematic Assessment Cycle

Adapted from Peggy Maki, Ph.D. by Marilee J. Bresciani, Ph.D.

Mission/Purposes

Goals

Outcomes

Gather Data

Interpret Evidence

Implement Methods to Deliver Outcomes and Methods to Gather Data

Make decisions to improve programs; enhance student learning and development; inform institutional decision-making, planning, budgeting, policy, public accountability
Typical Components of An Outcomes-Based Assessment Plan
(Bresciani, 2006)

• Program or Course/Workshop Name
• Program Mission or Course/Workshop Purpose
• Goals
  – Align with your strategic plan, strategic initiatives, institutional goals, division goals, CAS goals, or department goals
• Outcomes
  – Student Learning and Program
• Planning for Delivery of Outcomes
  – Concept Mapping
  – Workshop Design (e.g., syllabus for the workshop)
Typical Components of An Outcomes-Based Assessment Plan, Cont.  (Bresciani, 2006)

• Evaluation Methods
  – Link the method directly to the outcome
  – Include criteria for each method as it relates to each outcome
  – Add Limitations, if necessary
  – Include Division, Institutional, or State Indicators
Typical Components of An Outcomes-Based Assessment Plan, Cont.

• Implementation of Assessment Process
  – Identify who is responsible for doing each step in the evaluation process (list all of the people involved in the assessment process at each step of the process)
  – Outline the timeline for implementation
  – Identify who will be evaluated
  – Identify other programs who are assisting with the evaluation
  – Identify who will be participating in interpreting the data and making recommendations and decisions
Typical Components of An Outcomes-Based Assessment Report

• Program Name
• Outcomes
• Results
  – Summarize the results for each outcome
  – Summarize the process to verify/validate the results
  – Summarize how the results link with performance indicators
Typical Components of An Outcomes-Based Assessment Report, Cont.

- Decisions and Recommendations
  - Summarize the decisions/recommendations made for each outcome
  - Identify the groups who participated in the discussion of the evidence that led to the recommendations and decisions
  - Summarize how the decisions/recommendations may improve performance indicators
  - Identify how intended improvements enhance strategic initiatives, if applicable
Typical Components of An Outcomes-Based Assessment Report, Cont.

• Decisions and Recommendations, Cont.
  – Summarize the suggestions for improving the assessment process
  – Identify when each outcome will be evaluated again (if the outcome is to be retained)
  – Identify those responsible for implementing the recommended changes
  – Identify the resources needed to make the necessary improvements, if applicable
Goals

- They are broad, general statements of [1] what the program wants students to be able to do and to know or [2] what the program will do to ensure what students will be able to do and to know.
- They are not directly measurable. Rather,
- They are evaluated directly or indirectly by measuring specific outcomes related to the goal.
- They are related to the mission and goals of the department and college in which the program resides, and to the mission and goals of the College, District, and/or System.
Example Program Goals

• To design programs, services, and policies that contribute to an equitable and inclusive environment
• To advance student health, safety, and well-being
• To develop students’ spiritual awareness
Other Examples

• To facilitate the development of students’ leadership and civic engagement
• To encourage creativity and divergent thinking
• To promote culturally sensitive student behavior and environments
Other Examples, Cont.

• To provide quality services
• To provide responsive services
• To provide excellent customer service
• To be attentive to parental requests
• To expand our services
Ask these Questions about your Goals

• Is it meaningful?
• Is it important?
• Is it a broad, general statement of either what the program wants students to be able to do and to know or what the program will do to ensure what students will be able to do and to know?
• Is it related to my department or program mission and goals?
• Is there an accompanying outcome to measure this goal?
Select a goal or determine with which goal(s) do your outcomes align with that goal?
Outcomes

- Outcomes are more detailed and specific statements derived from the goals.
- These are specifically about what you want the end result of your efforts to be. In other words, what do you expect the student to know and do as a result of your one hour workshop; 1 hour individual meeting; website instructions; etc.
- It is not what you are going to do to the student, but rather it describes how you want the student to demonstrate what he or she knows or can do.
Other Ways to Look at This

• How well are you achieving your goals?
  – How do you know?

• What are your intended end results of all of your activities?
  – How well are you achieving those end results?

• Why do you do all you do?
  – What is it that you expect students to take away from all those activities?
  – How do you know they “got” it?
Constructing Learning Outcomes, Cont.

- Outcomes use active verbs such as articulate, illustrate, conduct, synthesize, analyze, construct, etc.

- Depending on what level of learning you expect from your learning delivery method.

  - [http://www.coun.uvic.ca/learn/program/hndouts/bloom.html](http://www.coun.uvic.ca/learn/program/hndouts/bloom.html)
Another Take on Bloom

1. Knowledge
2. Skills
3. Attitudes
4. Values Clarification
5. Behavior Change
Outcomes, Cont.

• You may also want to start with outcomes that are more manageable.
  – For instance, articulate outcomes for your outreach programs first;
  – then later, move to your individual consultations;
  – than your information pieces, if at all.
Ideas for Learning Outcomes

- NASPA/ACPA Learning Reconsidered and Learning Reconsidered II
- CAS Outcomes
- Your Prof. Assoc. Outcomes
- AACU Essential Outcomes
- Your College’s General Education Outcomes
Outcomes, Cont.

- Make a conscious decision to articulate outcomes that infer pre- and post-tests
- Make a conscious decision to be held responsible for behavior
- Remember that your outcomes may look different for your various constituents -- you may want to start with your more manageable population first, such as your Para-professionals
Outcomes, Cont.

• Regardless of whether your goals are top down – the outcome is where you operationalize the goal.
• Therefore, the outcome or end result of the doing allows you to “personalize” the goal to your own program.
Example Outcome

Students will demonstrate responsible leadership by organizing a successful event that their group’s membership deems important and relevant to the residential community.
Examples of Outcomes, Cont.

1. Students will identify at least two examples of social group identities
2. Students will explain the way unearned privilege may negatively impact performance and cross-cultural relationships
Refining Outcomes

Students will learn the importance of taking precautions before having unprotected intercourse.
Refining Outcomes, Cont.

Students will be able to identify the strategies of preparing for protected intercourse.

Students will be able to identify the situations they can get into that lead them to unprotected intercourse.
Refining Outcomes

Students will be able to advocate for their well-being
Refining Outcomes, Cont.

Students will be able to identify the procedure and steps for advocating for their well-being.
Refining Outcomes

Students will understand the role that their religion plays in their life.
Refining Outcomes, Cont.

Students will be able to explain the role that their religion plays in their life.
Refining Outcomes

• Student athletes will avoid the abuse of alcohol, tobacco, and other unauthorized use of controlled substances.
Refining Outcomes, cont.

• Student athletes will articulate the consequences of the abuse of alcohol, tobacco, and other unauthorized use of controlled substances.

• They will also identify the peer pressures that may cause them to abuse such substances.
Refining Outcomes

• Increased services to accommodate 20% more students.
Refining Outcomes, Cont.

• 20% more students will be able to articulate the benefit of seeking early career advising.
Refining Outcomes

Through the various programs (social, academic, and cultural) students will gain a greater level of understanding and appreciation of cultural differences as well as their own culture.
Refining Outcomes, Cont.

Through the various programs (social, academic, and cultural) students will articulate the social and economical advantages of being able to work effectively among cultural differences.

Students will be able to identify their cultural heritage and explain the contributions of their culture to their program of study.
Refining Outcomes

Students will interact with the campus community to ensure that SAC is a welcoming and inclusive environment.
Refining Outcomes, Cont.

Students will be able to identify characteristics of a welcoming and inclusive environment and explain how improvements can be made within SAC when these characteristics are absent.
Questions to Ask Yourself About Outcomes

• Is it measurable/identifiable?
• Is it meaningful?
• Is it manageable?
• Who is the target audience of my outcome?
• Who would know if my outcome has been met?
• How will I know if it has been met?
• Will it provide me with evidence that will lead me to make a decision for continuous improvement?